

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EUR-12 SSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /090 W

-----099540 160118Z /64

R 151615Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2122

INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 4740

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SF

SUBJECT: ACTING STATE PRESIDENT SWORN IN

1. PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE MARAIS VILJOEN WAS SWORN IN YESTERDAY (AUGUST 14) AS ACTING STATE PRESIDENT TO REPLACE DR. NIC DIEDERICH'S WHO SUFFERED A HEART ATTACK OVER THE WEEKEND.

2. DR. DIEDERICH'S IS REPORTEDLY MUCH IMPROVED, BUT PRIME MINISTER VORSTER TOLD THE PRESS THAT DIEDERICH'S NEEDS COMPLETE REST TO ENSURE RECOVERY. VORSTER SAID IT IS EXPECTED THAT VILJOEN WILL BE FILLING IN FOR NO MORE THAN A MONTH.

3. VILJOEN, 62, IS A VETERAN NATIONALIST AND HAS SERVED FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS AS SENATE PRESIDENT. PRIOR TO THAT APPOINTMENT, HE WAS FOR NINE YEARS MINISTER OF LABOR AND HELD AT DIFFERENT TIMES IN THE SAME YEARS THE PORTFOLIOS OF COLOURED RELATIONS, INTERIOR, AND POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS. VILJOEN HAD A LONG CAREER WITH DIE TRANSVALER BEFORE BECOMING AN MP IN 1953. IN A JUNE 1975 EDITORIAL, THE RAND DAILY MAIL CALLED HIM "CLEARLY VERKRAMP AND A POLITICAL OPPORTUNIST" AND CASTIGATED

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HIM FOR SAYING THAT IF TIMES EVER BECAME HARD IN SOUTH AFRICA, BLACKS WOULD BE REMOVED FROM JOBS IN FAVOR OF WHITES.

4. COMMENT: DR. DIEDERICH'S' HEART ATTACK INCREASES THE CHANCES OF HIS RETIREMENT BEFORE THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL SET-UP IS IMPLEMENTED, POSSIBLY IN 1980, THUS OPENING THE WAY FOR VORSTER'S ACCESSION TO THE NEW EXECUTIVE STATE PRESIDENCY

SHOULD HE WISH TO DO SO. SHOULD DIEDERICH'S NOT RECOVER AND
RETIRE EARLY, VILJOEN COULD CONTINUE AS ACTING STATE PRESIDENT.
EDMONDSON

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NNN

Message Attributes

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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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